Gilbert Garcia locks up business with his Gerber multiplier

BY RITA FERNANDEZ
NEWS-BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Gilbert Garcia, Belen locksmith, jokes that his favorite tool is the cash register because "that's when you ring up the sale," but "for getting the work done," his favorite tool is the Gerber multiplier.

The Gerber multiplier has its name because it does multiple tasks — sort of the Swiss army knife of its profession. It unfolds and has several special attachments: regular and needle-nose pliers, wire cutters, a crimper for crimping or soldering connectors onto wires, a serrated knife, a file, a can opener, a regular knife blade, a Phillips screwdriver, three sizes of straight screwdrivers, a ruler, and a lanyard to keep from losing the tool. In the same pouch, there are other specialized tool tips that can be added onto the multiplier.

"It's not like it takes the place of a tool chest but if I'm out there working on a vehicle, it saves running in for a tool," Garcia said. "It saves me steps, saves me time. This place is so busy that anything that saves me time is my friend."

Garcia explains that the Gerber multiplier is handy for holding things while removing or replacing locks. He uses it frequently when repairing locks on vehicles. It is very useful for taking a door panel apart. If he needs to cut some wire, it works. If he needs a pocket knife, it's there.

The Gerber multiplier is durable. Garcia said he's had this one for a couple of years. They generally last about two years before he wears them out — unless he loses them. In the 15 years since he took up boating, Garcia has lost a number of Gerber multipliers overboard.

Garcia's second favorite tool, and one he uses a lot, is the impact screwdriver. This is an electrical device for inserting especially long screws. With it, he can insert three-inch screws into doors and frames and make them virtually impregnable. While other doors and locks that have been screwed in with standard 3/4-inch screws can be kicked in, those that Garcia installs won't budge.

Fundamentally, Garcia and Son's main product is a quality that can't be measured. "We provide security in many different forms," Garcia said. "We make keys and install locks, safes, alarms and video systems. We also manufacture security iron. We get a lot of joy out of helping somebody feel more secure."

The security iron Garcia and his staff manufactures serves a double purpose. Not only does it make doors and windows more secure, it is also ornamental and decorative.

Garcia explains that's why his firm does so many different things — unlike most locksmiths who handle a limited number of tasks. "Some locksmiths only know how to do one kind of lock. In a little town, you have to do everything. Here, you need to be able to do all commercial and residential locks, and foreign and domestic cars," he said.

Garcia is an extremely knowledgeable locksmith. Until two years ago, he taught workshops at the national locksmith convention. He has also taught at many state, regional, and international conventions. Some of these have been held in Massachusetts, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Colorado, California, Nevada and Washington state. He's also taught in Cancun and Guanajuato, Mexico. He's taught at the New Mexico convention innumerable times and instructed in several cities in Texas, including Dallas, San Antonio and El Paso.

He started his locksmith business in 1968. At that time, he was also teaching school. He taught ninth grade government for five years here in Belen. Garcia also taught classes in the construction trades, Spanish, and New Mexico history. And he did all this while running the shop at the same time.

He eventually quit teaching to operate the business full time, realizing he might not always have the business opportunity. Now he remarks ironically that if he had

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Rita Fernandez/News-Bulletin photos

Gilbert Garcia demonstrates one of the many uses of the Gerber Multiplier.

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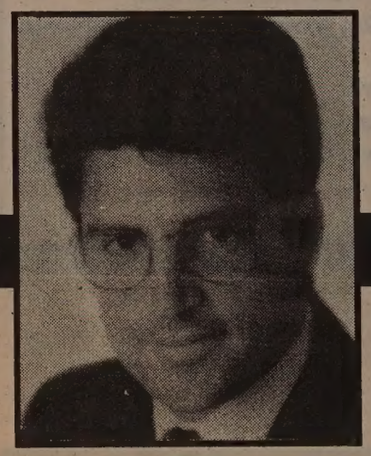

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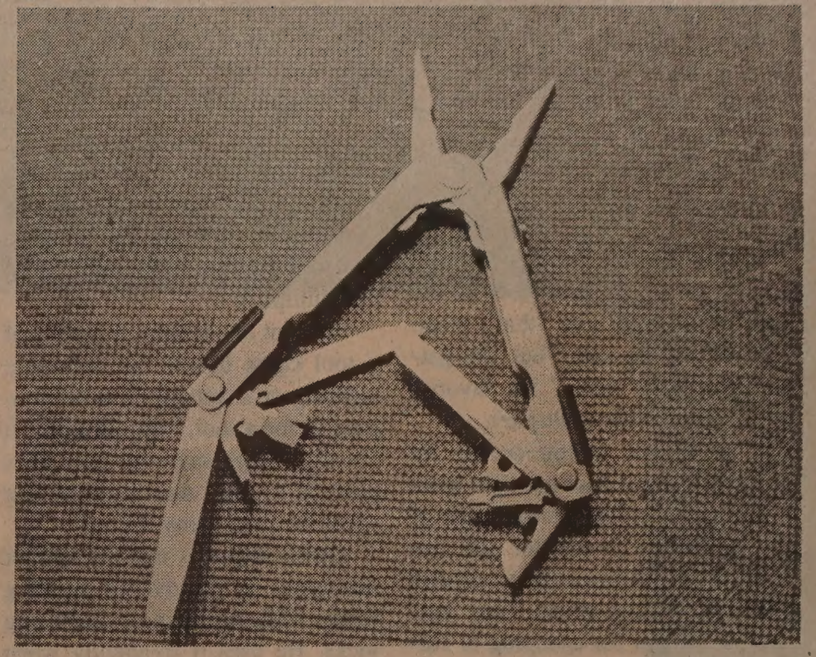
continued teaching, he could have retired a couple of years ago. Instead, he's still running the shop. It will be 29 years in December.

But he has no regrets. As he said, "I've made a living and had a lot of fun. And the best part of this business is my blushing bride Lorraine and I have run it together all day, every day, all these years. I'm a lucky guy and I know it."

Besides attending to his business, Garcia has long been involved in community life. He served on the Belen city council for four terms — 16 years altogether.

Gilbert Garcia is very much a part of this town and knows the community well. "I've been living on the same block all my life. This is where I was born and raised," he said. He's lived in Belen continuously except for the time he spent in the military service.

His favorite tool is a lot like him. It performs many functions, serves many purposes. It is the ideal tool to represent a man who has many talents and serves his community in a multitude of ways.



Rita Fernandez/News-Bulletin photo

The Gerber Multiplier is Gilbert Garcia's favorite tool.

Mesa Vista Animal Hospital, Boarding and Grooming

Name of business: Mesa Vista Animal Hospital, Mesa Vista Boarding and Grooming.

Address and telephone number: 1533 E. River Road, Belen. Hospital number is 864-2249; kennel number is 864-6636.

Owners: Roy Stewart, DVM, and Jill Stewart

Other key employees: Sandra Peek and Morley Griego, assistants; Cyndi Blake, Groomer, Trisha Nunez, and Ronnie Smith, kennel assistants.

What products and services do you offer?

Clinical care, health care products, all breed dog and cat grooming, short and long term boarding, flea and tick dips and products.

How long has it been in business?

At this location since 1979; new building in 1989

Do you have a business or service philosophy?

We strive to treat your pet as if it were one of our own.

Are there other things you'd like people to know about your business?

Caring, compassionate animal care.

What's the most unusual service you've offered a customer?

Writing a health certificate for several falcons going on a direct flight to England.

Avonite

Name of business: Avonite, Inc.

Address and telephone number: 1945 Highway 304, Belen, 87002; call (505) 864-3800.

Owners: Private corporation owned by Aristech Chemical Corporation and the Ross Group of private individuals.

Other key employees: J.J. Windfelder, President; F.J. Scott, executive vice president; Richard Fila, chief financial officer; and Michael Williams and Allan Hanlon, New Mexico sales.

What products and services do you offer?

Sheet stock for counter tops and other surfaces; resin-based sinks and vanity bowls; molded products for garden landscaping; installed countertops in the Rio Grande Valley.

What makes your business unique?

We manufacture sheet goods for world wide distribution. We install finished tops for central New Mexico market. We train independent businesses to fabricate and install countertops using our sheet products. We

Richard P. Eisen, CPA

Name of Business: Richard P. Eisen, CPA.

Address and telephone number: 1670 Bosque Farms Boulevard, Bosque Farms, (middle of Bosque Farms, across the

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